

HLA Journal Vol. XXVIII no. 2, December 1971

THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII LIBRARY, 1907-1920

By David Kittelson Curator,
Hawaiian Collection University of Hawaii Library

Resting in a stack behind Hamilton Library's main floor periodical browsing area is an aging maroon volume bearing the call number HB171 S56. However nondescript Henry Sidgwick's *Principles of Political Economy* appears, it holds a special distinction among the University of Hawaii Library's 1.1 million volumes. This is the university's first library book. It was purchased from Honolulu bookseller E. Herrick Brown & Company on September 12, 1908 for \$4.50 and ten days later received accession number 1 of the Library of the College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts of the Territory of Hawaii. The territorial legislature founded the college on April 23, 1907. A few months later the school's board of regents established a temporary campus in Honolulu on Young Street behind the present Linekona School. An old frame house which formerly quartered the Chinese Consulate was moved onto campus and renovations began in preparation for the college's expected opening in the fall of 1908. This single building was expected to hold all of the new college's facilities—office, lecture room, two laboratories, and a library. The parlor, a 13 x 18' room with French windows opening onto a porch, was chosen for the library.

In November 1907 the regents discovered that they could qualify for 1907/1908 federal land grant funds if the college were functioning before the end of that fiscal year. The board hurriedly appointed Willis Pope of the Territorial Normal School acting dean with instructions to prepare the college for students by February 1908. He quickly drew up a curriculum, enrolled five of his normal school students on a preparatory basis, and hired two other faculty members to tutor them. The library for these very first students consisted only of a dictionary, an atlas, and a sixteen-volume set of the *Encyclopedia Americana*. Pope later secured the part-time services of Miss Caroline Green, assistant librarian at the Honolulu Library and Reading Room (predecessor of the Library of Hawaii and, later, the Hawaii State Library). Together they began planning for the new college's library facilities and collections. They first spent \$239.65 to cram the small library with a desk and chair set, four library tables, twelve chairs, one large bookcase with glass doors, a set of accession record books, a four-drawer card catalog cabinet, and "library paste, pencils, etc." Most of the college's early book buying was supported by a \$5,000 land grant fund which contained a number of restrictions. Only science books related to the college's agriculture and mechanic arts mission could be purchased. However, this stipulation was relaxed to include English and economic books. The money also had to be encumbered by June 30, 1908. By April of 1908 Miss Green and Pope had drawn up a periodicals subscription list and on June 18th, days before the funds lapsed, the regents approved a gigantic book order. Although the legislature had also given the college \$5,000 for book ordering, it behooved the librarian to expend the federal money first since the territorial allotment did not expire until June 30, 1909.

Miss Green soon became concerned about the many bags of government documents arriving with each mail delivery. Under the Public Printing Law of March 1, 1907, all land grant colleges had been constituted as depositories for federal documents. The college had welcomed federal financing, but the librarian found that this sea of documents was just too much of a good thing. At first she arranged them in makeshift cases, but later piled them in their unopened mail bags in an adjoining room. By July 1908 the problem of storing the documents had become so serious that the regents decided to erect a separate library building. The new structure was eventually used for classrooms instead, and the library was merely left to expand throughout the original building. A stock room, cataloging room, and librarian's office were added to the reading room and eventually the library occupied half of the building. On September 14, 1908 the college formally opened its doors to five freshmen and the five original preparatory students. Miss Green, who had finally been hired on a full time basis, joined twelve other faculty members in welcoming the students. Her salary of \$75 per month was approximately half of that paid to the lowest instructor.

The college's curriculum as well as federal book ordering restrictions resulted in a library collection with a decidedly scientific bent. College president John Gilmore, however, soon realized the necessity of the library's developing a speciality. He wrote to Howard Ballou of the Hawaiian Historical Society, asking for advice on Hawaiian acquisitions by the library. Ballou replied by giving the library a set of basic books as well as a list for suggested purchases.

The library bought these books for \$350 from Thomas G. Thrum, Stationer & Bookseller (now HOPACO). Within the year William Drake Westervelt, a noted Hawaiian scholar, also gave a selection of Hawaiian books to the library which by then had a separate Hawaiian bookcase. Other areas of the library were built up through numerous gifts. In October 1909, for example, a German tourist donated 500 volumes of German literature. Valentine Buehner, the German language instructor, helped catalog the material.

Miss Green was handicapped by having to spend a portion of her time operating the college bookstore. She also had no one to assist her in either phase of her duties. By 1909 the emphasis on expending federal book funds resulted in the territorial monies not being spent as rapidly as Governor Walter Frear felt they should. He subsequently transferred \$750 from the library's book fund to meet shortages and overexpenditures in other territorial departments. By June 1909 with the end of the territorial fiscal year approaching, a sizable balance remained in the library's book budget. On the advice of President Gilmore, Miss Green hurriedly placed an order with Honolulu bookseller A. B. Arleigh for as many books as the remaining sum would cover. This blanket order amounted to 900 books and cleaned out the store's book-stock. To the librarian's consternation, many of these books turned out to be children's literature, including such titles as Dolly Dialogues, Faith Gartney's Girlhood, When Molly Was Six, and Mopsa the Fairy. A struggling agricultural college library was hardly the place for a wide selection of fairy tales. By the end of its first full year of operation the library had about 5,000 volumes and 7,000 pamphlets which were mostly bulletins of agricultural experiment stations and the United States Department of Agriculture. The

Territorial Board of Agriculture and the Hawaii Experiment Station (which incidentally was not connected with the college) also contributed many serial duplicates to help in building up the fledgling library's back files.

The library was crowded and noisy with students socializing as well as studying. The faculty also held student conferences at library tables and a few even conducted classes in the reading room. Exterior noises also plagued the students and faculty. Gilmore complained about the neighboring school janitor and his family who lived adjacent to the library. The library and classes were being distracted by the "garrulous parents" and their "inadequately cared for dogs and children." "The premises and those who occupy them are filthy and frequently not fit to look upon", he said, and referred also to a room which was "occupied by young ladies" and to the "scenes that were visible from their window." The janitor also cooked outdoors and, apart from the very real olfactory distractions, Gilmore worried about sparks from his fire setting the college ablaze.

During 1909/10, \$3,879.65 in federal funds were spent by the library for what were primarily science books. Territorial book expenditures in the social sciences and humanities amounted to \$3.07. Most of the library's meager legislative appropriation was spent on wooden shelves to store the growing collection. The following year was more of the same—a crowded, noisy library, with but one librarian attempting to order, receive, catalog, and circulate a collection which had grown to 7,500 books, 8,000 pamphlets, and 100 periodical subscriptions. After that year the librarian needed a rest and got a month's leave of absence for a mainland trip during September 1911.

The 1911 territorial legislature shortened the school's cumbersome and un-distinctive name to the College of Hawaii. This accompanied a renewed college-wide effort to promote its facilities and resources throughout the entire island community by a regular extension program. The library's reading room had been available for evening lectures almost from the day the college opened. The collection could be used by the public and persons complying with library regulations were free to borrow books for home use. The library later offered to mail books to anyone in the territory who was willing to pay the postage both ways and who would guarantee the book's return. A traveling library was started in cooperation with the Department of Public Instruction. Twenty-five agricultural and scientific books were packed in wooden boxes which were shipped to the principals of fourteen rural schools throughout the major islands. The books were then loaned to teachers, older students, and adults before being shipped to the next school on the circuit. The college library provided books, boxes, and general direction while the Department of Public Instruction assumed responsibility for distribution and transportation charges. The college also presented a series of fifteen Monday afternoon lectures on phases of school curriculum to elementary school teachers. Miss Green regularly lectured on "The School Library." The quality of the library's scientific collection and its availability were not lost on the scientists working in Hawaiian public and private institutions. They even asked for college library book ordering privileges since their respective agencies generally had limited book budgets. The regents thereupon authorized \$2,500 of the \$7,000 federal book allotment for 1910/11 to be set aside for

her detailed explanation, the regents backed off, but not without a parting admonition to use "greater care" in the future.

In the fall of 1917, following several years of fruitless petitions to the regents, Professor and Mrs. Bryan went on a semester's leave of absence. Mrs. Bryan became ill on her trip, developed complications on her return to Honolulu, and died in May 1919. Miss Clara Hemenway, sister of one of the regents, was named to the librarian's position.

At the end of the 1917/18 school year, the library had 23,933 bound volumes, 30,733 pamphlets, and subscribed to 129 periodicals. Less than half of these were in the main library room. After March 28, 1918 all of the German books were also banished to the dark, dank basement. Because of the anti-German hysteria prevalent in the islands during the war years, the regents had voted that "the study of the German language be discontinued at the College of Hawaii." A student complained about spending "a few hours wandering aimlessly about the library in search of some book, hidden away in a little cubbyhole because of insufficient space to properly shelve it." To accommodate their students, professors began storing library books most essential to classes on their office bookshelves.

In 1919 a federal commission visited the islands to survey Hawaiian educational practices. In their examination of the College of Hawaii they commented on the library situation. Although they noted that the collection represented "a most creditable beginning considering the short period of the institution's existence," they were appalled by the library's "critical condition in which there is neither the room to shelve books nor the opportunity for students to properly use them." The commission recommended constructing a new library building and increasing the staff from a professional and an untrained assistant to two professionals and two trained assistants. In addition they suggested that the overworked librarian be relieved of her duties as bookstore manager. These recommendations undoubtedly comforted the staff and library patrons, but there was no immediate relief during the college's existence. On June 30, 1920, the day before the College of Hawaii became the University of Hawaii, the library was crammed with 25,709 bound volumes and 40,000 pamphlets. Not until 1925 did the library finally move into larger quarters.

REFERENCES

- College of Hawaii Catalogue. Honolulu, 1909 1920.
- College of Hawaii Condensed Accession Book. Honolulu, 1908-1920.
- College of Hawaii Register of Officers and Students. Honolulu, 1914.
- Dean, Arthur. Historical Sketch of the University of Hawaii. Honolulu, 1927.
- Donaghho, John. "Reminiscences." Ka Palapala. (1920), 19-21, 105.
- Green, Caroline. "The Library." Hawaii Collegian. (1910), 12.
- Hemenway, Clara. "The New Library." Ka Palapala. (1925), 21-24.
- Krauss, Beatrice. "Some O [sic] the Founders Reminisce." Hawaii Alumnus, (March 23, 1937), 12-14, 19-20, 23.
- MacCaughey, Vaughan. Extension Work of the College of Hawaii. Honolulu, 1914.
- Minutes of the Board of Regents of the College of Hawaii. Honolulu, 1907-1920.
- Ka Palapala. Honolulu. 1916 1920.
- Report of the Board of Regents of the College of Hawaii to the legislature. Honolulu, 1909 1921.
- Report to the Board of Regents of the College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts. Honolulu 1907 1910.
- U.S. Department of the Interior. Bureau of Education. A Survey of Education in Hawaii Washington, 1920.